"WALGAJUNMANHA": STORYTELLING AND INDIGENOUS CULTURAL RESURGENCE

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Abstract – Historically, Indigenous cultures have been rendered "transparent" (Byung-Chul Han 2014; Di Blasio 2020) through oppressive legal mechanisms such as the "*terra nullius*" doctrine in Australia and the 1876 Indian Act in Canada, whose effects persist up to the present time. These frameworks have denied Indigenous existence itself, contributing to systemic marginalization. However, Indigenous narratives have become vital to the decolonization process, both locally and transculturally, fostering the preservation and regeneration of Indigenous languages and knowledge systems. This study examines the role of storytelling, understood in a broad Indigenous sense, in cultural resistance and resurgence by analyzing the works of contemporary Indigenous poet Charmaine Papertalk Green in dialogue with other textualities. Through literature, it identifies recurring themes and discursive strategies employed by Indigenous artists to contest colonial narratives and assert collective identity and memory. Drawing on an interdisciplinary framework that integrates literary studies, postcolonial theory, and Indigenous studies, this paper contributes to understanding Indigenous literature as a political and cultural practice of resurgence. In a global context where Indigenous peoples continue to struggle for recognition and historical justice, the analysis of Indigenous literary production offers crucial insights into ongoing decolonization processes.

Keywords: indigenous Australia; resurgence; storytelling; poetry; Charmaine Papertalk Green.

The concept of "walgajunmanha", in the Wajarri language of Western Australia, as used by Yamaji writer Charmaine Papertalk Green, encapsulates the act of writing as both a political and cultural practice. This study explores how Indigenous storytelling – in the multifarious forms it takes traditionally and in contemporary contexts, both in writing and across various expressions of artistic representation – functions as a tool for cultural resurgence in (or after) the postcolonial era. The regeneration of Indigenous identity marks a transition from the colonial-imposed "transparency" (i.e., a systematic erasure of Indigenous presence) to a movement of cultural and political self-assertion. Storytelling, in oral, written, and visual forms, plays a transformative role in challenging the colonial status quo and constructing new modes of Indigenous sovereignty (Simpson 2017).

Indigenous resurgence marks a shift from the colonially imposed "transparency" of Indigenous peoples, where their presence was systematically erased, to a movement of reclamation through cultural, political, and artistic expressions. Indigenous bodies and cultures have historically been rendered "transparent" through legal frameworks such as the Indian Act (1876) in Canada, or doctrines like "*terra nullius*" in Australia, effectively denying Indigenous existence and agency (Coleman 2017). However, contemporary Indigenous writing, along with various forms of linguistic regeneration, serve as sites of resurgence. This paper explores the importance of Indigenous writing, or "walgajunmanha", in the process of decolonization, examining how it works as a powerful tool for cultural resistance and resurgence, and as a way of expressing, representing, and sharing Indigenous epistemologies. My reference to the concept of transparency entails a trope of our times and loosely addresses two different theoretical and philosophical perspectives that I have analyzed elsewhere (Di Blasio 2020). On one side, in *The Transparency Society*, Byung-Chul Han (2014) links transparency to an obsession with "making visible", invoking the metaphor of the crystal cage in a society that

compulsively exposes its subjects. This dynamic encompasses both bodies and behaviors and verges on a kind of pornographic display or ostentation. Transparency thus functions as a mechanism for continually observing adherence to norms, reinforcing a conformism that conveniently serves the goals of capitalistic consumerism. From this angle, transparency aligns closely with Foucault's idea of knowledge as a form of power. As Édouard Glissant (1990; 2007) puts it, "In order to understand and thus accept you, I have to reduce [you]"[1], a gesture of reduction that reveals the violence inherent in the logic of total visibility. From a different, more clinical perspective, José van Dijck identifies the body as the central object of a diagnostic anxiety that defines our era. Within the framework of medical investigation, transparency becomes a gnoseological model: a means of gaining access to what is otherwise concealed from plain sight. Here again, transparency serves as a conduit for knowledge, an enabling force that facilitates a particular epistemic relationship with the body. In both cases, transparency is not a property of the object itself, but of the medium through which the object is apprehended. And in their shared compulsion to reveal, both approaches ultimately end up problematizing the act of seeing rather than guaranteeing clarity. Transparency, far from providing unmediated access to truth, proves illusory, if not outright deceptive.

My own focus shifts away from transparency as agency or epistemological tool, and instead considers it as a supposed quality of the object or subject under scrutiny, under the effect of the colonial gaze, which variably oversimplifies, reduces, and relegates to mere invisibility the bodies, cultures, and sovereignty of Indigenous people. And while this invisibility is obviously metaphorical, its implications are deeply embedded in real-world dynamics. This idea of transparency is particularly evident in Australian colonial and postcolonial history, although it could apply to other environments affected by colonialism, provided the necessary distinctions are made in order not to reduce this critical view to "yet another colonial strategy" (Trees 1993, p. 264), and to safeguard the specificity of each social, historical, cultural, and political situation, especially from my liminal position as a white European individual and scholar.

This perspective seems very consistent with the Australian context, where, starting from the inception of the colonial era, the bodies, traditions, cultures, languages, and sovereignty of the original inhabitants have thinned out to a "diaphanous" and "transparent" state, following the systematic denial of their legitimate political and cultural representation. It is therefore fitting to begin with the concept of "*terra nullius*", a symbolic cornerstone in the colonial imagination of modern Australia. The presence of the colonized subjects and bodies, in fact, disappears in the eyes of the colonizer: they are quite literally 'seen through', treated *as if* they were "transparent". These subjects and their bodies become transparent not by nature, but because they are culturally unintelligible, unassimilable within the colonial framework. Acknowledging their presence would threaten the imbalance of power that legitimizes and secures the colonial order. The paradox at the heart of this dynamic is, of course, that Indigenous peoples are not in any way inherently transparent; they are made to appear so by those in positions of dominance. Accordingly, transparency as a supposedly immanent condition of the object of the gaze, inevitably undermines the very notion of Indigenous legal, political, and cultural agency. Colonization of the Australian continent rests on the premise that the land was "nobody's land", a formulation that does not imply the actual absence of a population but rather the absence of any 'recognizable' (i.e., westernized) human and cultural sovereignty, 'legible' within Western terms. This aberrant doctrine was legally rejected by the landmark 1992 Mabo Decision. The High Court of Australia acknowledged the land rights of Indigenous people in the person of Eddie Mabo in the Mabo vs. Queensland case, finally dismantling the original colonial assumption of Australia as "*terra nullius*". Nevertheless, the question of land rights is still far from being resolved; at present, the central issue involves a yet to be ratified treaty. Australia is the only Commonwealth country that does not have a treaty with its Indigenous people, a fact that speaks to

[1] "Per poterti 'comprendere' e quindi accettare, […] devo ridur[ti]" (Glissant 1990; 2007, p. 173, translation mine).

the continued denial of the existence, prior presence on the land, and colonial dispossession of Aboriginal people[2].

In 2014, Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu* disassembles the narrative of "*terra nullius*", restoring to sight what had been obscured by the bias of transparency in the colonizers' gaze on the land, and its people. *Dark Emu* deals with the theme of the relationship between Indigenous people and the land in the pre-colonial epoch, highlighting the 'blindness' of the newcomers in hastily decoding, to their own advantage, the situation they found. As Tony Hughes-D'Aeth observes, *Dark Emu* represents one of the most sustained efforts to reassess the relationship between humans and the Australian environment, challenging long-standing assumptions about the land and its uses. Historically, the oral nature of Aboriginal societies meant that questions about their relationship to land were often relegated to disciplines like archaeology or anthropology, rather than being treated within the realm of historical inquiry. Pascoe's work, however, questions this disciplinary division by drawing on a wide range of sources to reveal that the common binary between colonial agriculture and Indigenous hunter-gatherer lifestyle is not only simplistic but fundamentally flawed. Through evidence of villages, permanent dwellings, grain harvesting, and sophisticated aquaculture systems, possibly among the earliest known stone constructions, Pascoe illustrates that many Indigenous communities engaged in forms of land management and food production that resemble settled agriculture. In doing so, *Dark Emu* constructs a rich interdisciplinary narrative, bridging archival records, oral histories, archaeology, anthropology, and more specialized fields such as ethnobotany and paleoecology, to foreground Indigenous land practices and knowledge systems often excluded from conventional historiography.

"*Terra nullius*", anyway, still tackles the paradigm (and paradox) of a situation closely interrelated to the premises and outcomes of colonialism, a situation in which sovereignty is denied to, and exercised against, the inhabitants of a territory who populated that land, and lived according to their own system of laws, customs and traditions for many thousands of years, before the arrival of the invaders. Notably, in the aseptic legal jargon imported by the colonizers, the colonized seem to disappear from sight, although remaining present and continuing to be there. They become "transparent", and this is the first step in a long series of negations *in* presence. Let me add, in passing, that *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* and the disheartening outcome of the 2023 Voice Referendum somehow disturbingly resonates in these considerations: "In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard", we read in the Statement, but in 2023 this was not the case[3].

Starting from these theoretical and political premises, I turn to literature as a space that can illuminate the contradictions inherent in this notion of transparency, as defined thus far, and even help untangle certain cultural and historical knots. Contemporary Indigenous literature has played, and is still playing, a pivotal role in highlighting these dynamics. It has helped to give back substance and "opacity" (as in medical endoscopic examination) to bodies, subjects, and their stories, in a slow process that has gradually rescued them from their forcibly induced state of transparency as invisibility. The process of deconstructing the principle of "*terra nullius*", the symbolic origin of transparency as invisibility, takes place in writing, or "walgajunmanha".

As stated above, in the poem by Charmaine Papertalk Green quoted in my title, *Walgajunmanha All Time*, the importance of writing, i.e., "walgajunmanha", is asserted in the Wajarri language of Western Australia, and reinforced in the reiterated epistrophe at the end of each stanza, the first going as follows:

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[2] This is a very topical issue in Australia today. See, for example, the *Get ready for Path to Treaty* in Queensland: https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/information-technology/recordkeeping-and-information-management/recordkeeping/resources-and-tools-for-records-management/get-ready-for-path-to-treaty https://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/programs-initiatives/tracks-treaty/path-treaty/about-path-treaty (last visit 30 June 2025).

[3] See here *The Uluru Statement from the Heart*: https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement/ (last visit 30 June 2025).

We write about our existence pre-invasion / And that has made us visible
We write about our existence during invasion / And that keeps us visible
Walgajunmanha / walgajunmanha / walgajunmanha (Papertalk Green 2019, p. 25)

These lines seem to describe exactly the process of being brought back to sight from a position of invisibility in as far as writing snatches away the transparency and recovers presence, by upholding the representative role that had been denied since the inception of the colonial period. In this poem, the use of Wajarri language contributes to the mighty decolonizing effect expressed in the poetic content by the subject of the poem[4].

The rest of the poem reasserts and restores the visibility of Indigenous epistemologies and knowledge systems, resistance and denunciation, cultural sovereignty and pride, as well as language and historical reclamation:

We write about the blood they spilt / and that honours ancestors' memories
We write about the land they stole / and that shows they are savage thieves
Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha

We write about our connection to country / and that challenges theirs
We write about our lived realities / and that shows them we survived
Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha

We write about sky world knowledge / and show them the first astronomers
We write about earth world knowledge / and show them a sustainable culture
Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha

We write about traditional food production / and contest their agriculture
We write about traditional mud huts / and debunk their walkabout romanticism
Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha

We write about Aboriginal deaths in custody / and show them we fight back
We write about deaths in police presence / and we are not blinded by lies
Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha

We write about racism experiences / punctures in their ethnocentric balloons
We write about campaign for Aboriginal rights / pens our weapon of choice
Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha / Walgajunmanha

We write about deep Aboriginal culture love /
and that shatters their assimilation into pieces (Papertalk Green 2019, p. 25)

Word after word, this poem functions as a powerful tool for decolonization. As such, it is a powerful instance of how poetic writing can function as a central strategy of Indigenous cultural resurgence. The repeated invocation of the Wajarri word "walgajunmanha" reverberates throughout the poem, anchoring each stanza and reclaiming the act of writing as a form of re-inscription of Aboriginal presence. Through its deliberate structure and rhetorical repetition, the poem enacts the very visibility it asserts: writing becomes both declaration and proof of survival, sovereignty, and epistemic endurance.

Each stanza of the poem reclaims a sphere of Aboriginal life that has been rendered invisible or distorted by colonial narratives. The text moves from ontological assertions ("we write about our existence pre-invasion") to historical reclamation ("we write about the blood they spilt"), from gnoseological, relational and environmental epistemologies ("we write about sky world knowledge")

[4] On the importance of language revitalization, along with storytelling, for decolonization see the valuable Wirlomin Project (*Wirlomin Noongar Language & Stories Project*. http://wirlomin.com.au/; last visit 30 June 2025).

to political activism ("we write about campaign for Aboriginal rights"). This progression maps an expansive terrain of Indigenous knowledges and experiences, rejecting the colonial fragmentation of identity and asserting instead a holistic and interconnected cultural logic.

The use of the Wajarri language is particularly significant: it not only asserts linguistic survivance but also embeds a decolonizing gesture within the very form of the poem. "Walgajunmanha" becomes an epistemological key, a word that does not just mean "writing" in a neutral sense, but writing as an Indigenous practice, innovating oral tradition, and that generates memory, knowledge, and political agency. This insistence on writing in one's own terms is crucial to what Leanne Simpson (2011) and other Indigenous thinkers have called resurgence: not a return to a romanticized past, but a dynamic regeneration of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, often articulated in tension with ongoing colonial conditions.

In this light, Papertalk Green's poem does not merely document injustice; it writes back against erasure, and reclaims authority over narrative, space, and voice. It insists on the legitimacy of Indigenous perspectives on astronomy, agriculture, housing, justice, and cultural continuity, each of which the colonial project has sought to erase or appropriate. The repeated refrain "walgajunmanha" reminds the reader that writing is not simply a tool introduced through colonization, but a means of Indigenous resurgence when wielded in Indigenous languages, for Indigenous purposes. As such, this poem is art, and a political and cultural intervention.

More subtle, but still related strategies can be found in another recent collection, *Art. Poems by Charmaine Papertalk Green and John Kinsella* (2022), which stages a dialogue between the two poets both *on* and *through* art. Green's sequence in the collection opens with the "Nullius" series ("Hands of Nullius"; "Vox Nullius: No Voice"; "Res Nullius: No Abandoned Land"; "Gubernare Nullius/Good Governance"; "Datum Nullius/Knowledge Plenty"), which provocatively reclaims and deconstructs the transparency-imposing logic embedded in the concept of "*terra nullius*". This is followed by a sequence of poems in which Papertalk Green's and Kinsella's voice alternate, and many of the texts engage with the visual art of Noongar painter Shane Pickett. Figurative art and poetry enter a fertile creative synergy that not only restores visible opacity, but also recreates epistemologies, cultural knowledge systems, and ways of knowing, as exemplified in the following poem, *On the Art of Shane Pickett: A Visual Feast of Seeing*:

> I stepped into the
> Hay Street Gallery
> A visual feast from
> An artist shifting the
> Layers of country and
> Story into seeing for
> Not only your eyes
> But your mind and
> Your senses jumping
> Off the canvas towards
> Or merging into the
> Canvas and embracing the
> Artistic feasts on offer
> The artist's hands of the
> Master of application
> The energy maker of seeing (Papertalk Green 2022, p. 9)

Here Papertalk Green pays homage to the transformative power of Pickett's visual art, foregrounding its ability to convey knowledge systems that go beyond the merely 'optical'. The poem evokes an immersive encounter with the artwork – "not only your eyes / but your mind and / your senses", suggesting that Pickett's painting is not simply something to be seen, but something to be experienced holistically. This synesthetic mode of reception aligns with Indigenous epistemologies

that integrate body, land, story, and spirit, restoring a relational understanding of knowledge that has been disavowed by Western aesthetic frameworks. Papertalk Green's poetic voice positions Pickett as both "the master of application" and "the energy maker of seeing", reaffirming his role as a cultural transmitter and epistemic guide. His layering of "country and / Story into seeing" collapses the boundaries between form and meaning, and the canvas becomes not a surface but a living space of encounter, where knowledge is *activated* rather than *represented*. In this way, the poem extends the decolonial project at the heart of *Art* (the collection, and also the very concept), asserting that both visual and verbal expression can converge to revive suppressed ways of seeing, knowing, and being, as key tenets of Indigenous cultural resurgence.

In *Mapping Culture Celebrating (On Shane Pickett's Art)* we read:

> Seeing is a celebration
> of everything in life
> not everyone can see
> or have the gift to
> bring stories alive from deep
> within country and spirit
> the landscapes,
> the healing waters
> the Balga grass trees,
> the distant hills,
> The fire and smoke
> The morning dew and mist
> The mapping cultures
> Dotted pathways across
> Country and held up
> And held together by
> the Dreaming from
> caves and rock art
> energy from seeing
> moved into the artist's
> hands and onto the
> canvas to healing
> seeing is celebration (ivi, p. 11)

This poem is formally striking in its visual and syntactic arrangement. The inconsistent use of capitalization at the beginning of lines and the frequent enjambments create a fluid and organic rhythm that mirrors both the unfolding of country and the immersive act of seeing. The poem resists the rigidity of conventional poetic structures in favor of a looser, more intuitive flow that echoes oral storytelling practices. The aural quality of the poem (its pacing, its pauses, its emphasis) emerges precisely through this interplay of line breaks and punctuation, underscoring the symbolic weight of the objects and places evoked: the Balga grass trees, the distant hills, the fire and smoke. These are not inert images; they are vital presences that structure memory, identity, and place.

The language of the poem performs what Simpson (2017) identifies as "*biskaabiiyang*", a "returning to ourselves", where cultural resurgence is not simply about survival, but about regeneration through story, image, and community. In this sense, *Mapping Culture Celebrating* functions as a map not just of landscape but of being and of belonging. The poem becomes a ceremonial site in itself, one where words convey the sense of history and where the act of naming – and of seeing – is collective, celebratory, and restorative. This intertextual and intermodal exchange (between poetry and painting, vision and voice) offers a model of storytelling that refuses fragmentation, working instead to reassemble a cultural cosmos from the very materials (the people and/in the land) colonialism sought to render invisible.

In the poem *Shane Pickett's "Allowing the Glow to Shine Through"* the focus is a vertically oriented abstract painting created in 2005:

> The soft glow of a campfire light
> In the darkness of night on country
> Allows an ancestral glow to shine through
> A glow which is storied in many ways
>
> The soft glow of the sun light bouncing
> Onto the landscapes of our inner being
> Finding its way through out to reach others
> With glowing warm hugs and beaming smiles
>
> The soft glow of a sunset sending light onto
> The hillsides and hill tops way off in the distance
> Making visible country that during the day
> Was blended into and part of a bigger vision
>
> The glow of the rising sun onto another day
> Shooting a steady radiance of light for the eye
> Splashing colours of ochre pink in the sky new
> emotions of hope in a world needing love of nature (Papertalk Green 2022, p. 20)

In the original visual text, layers of red ochres, whites, and light warm tones emerge from a darker background of deep blues, creating a glowing central movement that seems to pulse from within. Though non-representational, the work evokes a dynamic sense of landscape and ancestral presence, typical of Pickett's ability to translate Noongar spirituality into abstract visual language. The painting balances concealment and revelation, allowing the "glow" to resonate symbolically through layered form and colour. On one level (perhaps under Western eyes), Papertalk Green's poem may be read as a form of ekphrasis: a poetic response to Pickett's visual art centered on landscape. Yet, it goes beyond mere description, engaging in a profound dialogue between text and image, eye and hand, canvas and Country, giving voice to a culture that narrates time and space not only through language, but through image itself. The act of "seeing" becomes more than perception, it becomes cultural activation. The poem charts an ontological geography in which landscape and ancestral storylines are not separate domains, but coexistent expressions of a living epistemology. This entwining of space and time (of Country and Dreaming) yields a worldview that affirms Indigenous continuity and relationality, one that is simultaneously deeply local and cosmologically expansive. The ekphrastic gesture, then, responds not to figurative or representational imagery, detaching itself from the mere visible world. This marks a radical departure from traditional Western notions of ekphrasis, which often depend on descriptive fidelity and the mimetic representation of visual art. Here, the poetic voice engages with abstraction as a form of cultural translation, one that renders visible the invisible, and audible the silent stories of Country. The challenge and innovation lie in the ability of the poem to interpret and extend the ancestral and emotional resonances embedded in Pickett's layered strokes, not by decoding them, but by entering into relation with them. In doing so, the poem overturns the colonial logic of "*terra nullius*", which presupposed a blank land devoid of history, meaning, and presence. Instead, through this intermedial creative process – a dialogue between poetry and painting, story and vision –, it asserts an Indigenous resurgence grounded in relational knowledge and aesthetic vitality, rooted in the ongoing presence of Country. Far from empty, the land emerges as richly storied, animated by ancestral energy, and articulated through intersecting forms of expression that are in themselves signs of renewal.

In the last poem I'm going to consider, *The Colour of Connection* (2023), Charmaine Papertalk Green and Anna Naupa engage in a transcultural poetic dialogue, that spans from Western

Australia to the South Pacific. Their exchange exemplifies a form of Indigenous resurgence grounded in relational storytelling, oral tradition, and artistic expression. While addressing contemporary political issues (most pointedly the failure of Australia's 2023 Voice Referendum), the poem refuses to position this moment as final or definitive. Instead, it gestures toward a continuing narrative of resistance and renewal. Throughout the dialogue, the poets invoke ancestral knowledge, cosmological imagery, and ecological interconnection to reassert Indigenous belonging and presence. In the final stanza, which I quote below, Papertalk Green reimagines "the colour of connection" through the language of land, sea, and Dreamtime, envisioning relationality as something not yet fully captured by the artist's palette. This cosmological vision aligns once again with broader frameworks of Indigenous resurgence, in which storytelling and art function as vital tools for cultural continuity, and the creation of sovereign futures "under southern skies":

> Where to next?
> Charmaine, I listen to your country's debate about The Voice
> And I reflect on the journey we all share
> To respectfully reconcile the past with the present
> I wish strength and courage for all your people
> And for all people everywhere to show solidarity
> To pause from the daily minutiae and
> Channel our energy to positive human connection
> The colours of my Pacific Ocean and islands paint what is in our hearts
> Blues and greens for vitality and strength
> Warm sunshine yellow for hope and courage
> Volcanic fire for energy and moody greys for reflection
> What is the colour of connection?
> Connection across our seas and coasts
> Connection with our teven (ancestors)
> Connection to our journey into a future of proud cultural identity. (Anna Naupa)
>
> What is the colour of connection?
> This is a very good question to think about
> I imagine our connection colour is calming
> Pulling the sea, rivers and land together like a silk ribbon
> Gently floating down the river of life demanding attention
> Sprayed with greens, blues, ochres, browns, reds, yellows
> And colours that don't yet exist on the artists' palette
> Until connections become true, genuine and real
> The colour of connection to our Ancestors and Old People
> Can look like the long dusty red dirt road heading bush
> Or the bright coral blue water highways of sea, lakes, rivers
> Into the heartlands of existences long before the arrival
> Of the colour of mundongs (Europeans aka ghosts) to alter
> Our Ancestors very being and ways of living therefore
> Altering our way of being in challenging contested spaces
> Offering a Voice that was taken at and during colonisation
> A Voice that the land of the White Australia Policy cannot
> Fully come to grips with and are confused about because
> Australia is not the White Australia that was feed into a
> National identity of vegemite, thongs, meat pies and beer
> The White Australia Policy is akin to terra nullius a nasty
> deceiving liar of liars belonging way back in the dusty archives
> Our colour of connection could begin with the Voice!
> Anna, the grass remains soft and in place to continue yarning. (Charmaine Papertalk Green, 2023)

This poetic dialogue also resonates with Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (1990; 2007), particularly in its embrace of relationality as a rhizomatic model across space, language, and cultural specificity. Glissant's vision of identity as formed in relation, rather than in isolation or rootedness alone, finds a vivid expression here, where voices from Western Australia and the South Pacific assert a shared presence across Indigenous spaces and times. The poem subverts the flattening impulses of colonial knowledge systems that seek to "make transparent" Indigenous experience. Instead, as Glissant argues in his defense of the right to opacity, the poem preserves cultural particularity and poetic depth that need not be made legible to dominant frameworks in order to be valid or powerful. In this sense, *The Colour of Connection* not only embodies a poetics of resurgence, but also a poetics of relation, in which identity, knowledge, and a sense of the future emerge through interconnectedness without assimilation. The reference to constellations (such as to the Southern Cross elsewhere in the poem) and the invocation of ancestral presence within land, sky, and ocean, evoke what Glissant would define the archipelagic imagination: a mode of thinking and creating that flows between fragments, refusing a single center, and forming instead a polyphonic and dynamic sense of world. In the final stanza, the image of colours that "don't yet exist on the artists' palette" echoes again the rhizomatic notion of emergent cultural forms, originating from ongoing contact and creation, rather than from fixed schemes or linear time.

Through these poetic narratives, the very foundations of colonial constructs such as "*terra nullius*" are powerfully unsettled. By foregrounding ancestral presence, cosmological continuity, and storied landscapes, Papertalk Green and Naupa dissolve the fake myth of an "empty land" awaiting discovery or possession. In doing so, they also dismantle the epistemological premise of transparency, as both alleged 'absence' and the colonial desire to render land, people, and knowledge fully knowable, legible, and thus governable. Instead, the poets assert a sovereign opacity and spiritual density, where meaning resides in relation and story, not in the flattening gaze of settler historiography. The land is not blank but already "written", already witnessed, and already inhabited.

"*Biskaabiiyang*" deeply resonates in these considerations, and it offers a vital framework for understanding Indigenous cultural resurgence as a process that resists vertically arranged Western models of time and progress, and it describes a relational movement that integrates ancestral knowledge with present realities and future possibilities (Simpson 2011, 2017). In reclaiming their stories, Indigenous peoples dismantle the colonial "transparency" that rendered them invisible, transforming storytelling, writing and artistic creativity into a site of political agency and ontological presence. These processes echo across diverse Indigenous contexts, including Australian initiatives such as the already mentioned Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project[5], which similarly reactivates language, narrative, and Country to revitalize cultural knowledge and strengthen community ties. Also in this context, storytelling does not simply recover the past, it activates a living present and a decolonial future.

While approaching the end of my argument, and trying to draw some conclusions, one can aptly recall that the act of writing crucially contributes to the "returning to themselves" of Indigenous people as a visible political, social, and cultural entity. The Indigenous voices that narrate and are narrated are resurgent from the "transparent", un-representative role to which two hundred years of white domination have attempted to relegate them. Indigenous narratives not only challenge colonial narratives that have historically marginalized them, they also preserve language and knowledge systems, foster new forms of cultural and political sovereignty, and hold a transformative power in reclaiming identity, history, and agency.

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[5] See note n. 4.

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